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ANCIENT LITERATURE.

ESSAY ON THE INTERVIEW BETWEEN
HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(Concluded from Page 222, No. III.)

WE now come to the answer of our hero to the earnest solicitations of his affectionate spouse. In this he is made to show all the greatness worthy of the man, who, in the VIII. book of the Iliad, fears not Diomede; who is the principal performer in so terrific a scene at the end of book XII. who in book XIV. and other places, bravely contends with valiant Ajax; and in book XVI. slays Patroclus.

"Quaque ruit, non *tu* tantum terroris,
Ulysse;
"Sed *fortes etiam*: tantum trabit ille timoris."

On his part is admirably evinced a firmness of mind not to be overcome by the strongest temptations; and at the same time, a heart susceptible of the tenderest emotions of natural affection. "How," says Cu-chullin, "can I behold Bragela to raise the sigh of her breast?" He feels as a husband and father; but coolly considers his duty, as a man and a patriot. The *amor patriæ* predominates over every thing; yea, the very love he entertains for Andromache, the care he has for Astyanax, the regard he holds for himself and friends, are all absorbed in it, and increase the heat of his martial spirit. He spurns the appellation of a coward, and resolves to preserve inviolate that fame hitherto unspotted. His bosom beats high for the glory of his ancestors, and the honour of his family; yet he properly expresses his superior attachment to his wife, by declaring, that the fall of Troy, the destruction of his father, mother and brothers, would excite in him no such sorrowful feelings as her fate, when toiling a slave, and made the subject of Grecian insult, *Fælberor ηεαρ ατουρας* is worthy of particular observation, as a dignified figurative expression, which receives ample justice from the translation of Mr Cowper. "Thy sun of peace and liberty for ever set." The foul ex-

ultation of the Grecians over helpless weakness is truly the language of nature; and her manner of feeling their insults, and desire of possessing such a husband as Hector to break her servile chains, are extremely well conceived. His part is made to conclude with the prayer, that the tomb may receive his lifeless body, rather than he should live to hear her cries or see her tears. This is the strongest manner in which affection could be prest, and is a proper return for her declaration in line 410.

He now in transport of passion, turns to the child, which, fearing the warlike dress and aspect of its father, evades his grasp, and seeks shelter in the nurse's bosom. Here every minute circumstance is introduced, without in any degree lessening the sublimity of the piece. The three characters are made to stand in full view before the eye. The reader sees the endearing fears of the infant; beholds the parents' smile, which was wont to rise on more joyful occasions; sees the father remove the terror-causing object, and fondling his son; and hears him address the gods in his behalf. He prays that he may receive strength, even more than had his father; that he may be crowned with glory, and bring home to his mother the spoils of victory. It is not only natural, but reasonable, that a father, who is conscious of good or great qualities in himself, should wish them to descend to his son, to honour posterity, and profit mankind after his death. Thus it is with Hector; he is proud in the hope of his son's greatness. The same kind of parental pride is exemplified in the words of Ossian to his son:

"And Oscar, terrible wert thou, my best, my greatest Son! I rejoiced in my secret soul, when his sword flamed over the slain."

And also

"His renown will be a sun to my soul in the dark hour of my departure."

Hector returns the child to the arms of Andromache. The smile of joy inspired by her infant rises on her cheek, but is suddenly checked by the sting

of grief, which is incomparably expressed by Δακροεύνη λατασσα, “Smiling through her tears.” Overwhelmed with confusion, she sheds the tear of sorrow; and Hector again addresses her in a tone of sympathy combined with fortitude. He exhorts her to be cheerful, and piously to submit to the will of the Gods; for that without their direction, nothing could happen. Here a proper distinction may be seen, between the duty of a man and that of a woman: he desires her to go home, and industriously attend to her domestic concerns; while he goes to perform in the field, what is the duty of all men, and particularly of *himself*. This is exactly consonant with the spirit of the Grecian laws, which prohibited their women on pain of death to attend the Olympic games, and other public places, lest they should be too far seduced from their proper sphere of life. Such is the appropriate language of Hector,

“ And to the field goes he; where every flower,
Did as a prophet weep what it foresaw,
In Hector’s wrath.”

The conduct of Andromache is also strictly becoming; for, notwithstanding all her reluctance, she is obsequious to her husband’s will. This well corresponds with what Shakespeare gives as the duty of a wife:

“ Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
Even such a woman oweth to her husband.”

Her final departure is finely described by Ειποταλικουεν, δακρεψη λατασσα χερου. “She casts a longing, lingering look behind.” This is extremely significant of her fondness; and her weeping conveys to the mind a full idea of her condition. A scene nearly as affecting is in Shakespeare’s Henry VI. on the parting of Queen Margaret from Suffolk, with whom she was secretly in love:

“ Oh! let me intreat thee please; give
me thy hand,
That I may dew it with my mournful
tears;
Nor let the rain of heaven wet this place,
To wash away my woe-ful monuments.

Oh! could this kiss be printed in thy
hand,
That thou mightst think on these lips
by the seal,
Through whom a thousand sighs are
breath’d for thee.”

Go, speak not to me; even now be-
gone—

Oh! go not yet—Even thus two friends
condemn’d,
Embrace and kiss, and take ten thou-
sand leaves,
Loather a hundred times to part than I.
Yet now farewell, and farewell life with
thee !”

There here seems to be rather more passion than on the part of Andromache, which is certainly a fine stretch of the author’s imagination; but it seems to fall short of the latter, in regard to natural strokes and winning arguments. The feelings of Suffolk also, are more easily overcome than would be consistent with the character of the magnanimous Hector.

But certainly our author’s introducing the child along with the mother, gives the piece much additional pathos. It more immediately summons forth the father’s feelings with those of the husband; and gives a variety of representation, which brings the scene to admirable perfection. A similar passage may be quoted from Ossian, whose exalted genius, in many instances, seems to have been congenial with that of Homer.

“ And is Cuchulain fallen? Mournful are Tura’s walls, and sorrow dwells at Dun-caich. Thy spouse is left alone in her youth; the son of thy love is alone. He shall come to Bragela, and ask her why she weeps. He shall lift his eyes, and see his father’s sword. Whose sword is that? he will say, and the soul of his mother is sad.”

But to return. Her grief is strongly depicted in the sentence, where, when arriving at home, she raises the γαννη παντην. Despair pervades the whole house; and they raise the cry of grief. This is extremely natural among servants, who were fond of their generous master; and the sad forebodings of their minds are all realized in book XXII, where, notwithstanding the earnest dissuasions of both father and mother, he waits the attack of Achilles, and

falls a victim to his strength and cruelty. Andromache, when employed agreeably to Hector's injunction, hears a doleful cry from the tower. She is mightily agitated, and goes to seek the cause. She beholds her Hector cruelly dragged towards the fleet of Greece. Her part here is supported in a manner strictly consistent with her words and actions during the interview. And on this occasion also, Homer displays such vast power over the passions, that we are compelled to say, he is indeed the favourite of nature, who has access to her inmost recesses, and is full master of her deepest secrets.

To show, a little farther, the propriety of Andromache's character in the interview, may be adduced the lines of Virgil, where Aeneas comes to her, while making her yearly offering to Hector's ashes:

"Ut me conspexit venientem, & Troia circum
Arma auncis vidit, magnis exterrita
monstris,
Dirigit visu in medio; cator ossa reliquit:
Labitur, & longo vix tandem tempore
fatur:
Verane te facies, verus mibi nuncius
affers,
Nate Dea? vivisne! aut, si lux alma
recessit,
Hector ubi est? Dixit, lachrymasque
effudit, & omnem
Implevit clamore locum."*

The misery which she felt at her future lot, is also pathetically expressed, when she says,

"O felix una ante alias Priameia virgo,
Hostilem ad tumulum Trojae sub membris altis

* But when, at nearer distance, she beheld,
My shining armour, and my Trojan shield,
Astonished at the sight, the vital heat,
Forsakes her limbs, her veins no longer
beat;
She faints, she falls, and scarce recovering
strength,
Thus with a faltering voice she speaks
at length;
"Are you alive, O! goddess born?"
she said,
"Or if a ghost, then where is Hector's
shade?"
At this she raised a loud and frightful cry.
DAVDEN.

Jussa mori; quæ sortitus non pertalit
ullos,
Nec victoris heri tetigit captiva cubile!"**
evidently amounting to a declaration
that she would have suffered death,
rather than have submitted to the disagreeable lot of connection with
Pyrrhus.

Her lasting affection for Astyanax is also elegantly shown in her words, when bestowing to young Ascanius some vestments of her own working:....."Cape dona extrema tuorum
O mihi sola mei super Astynactis imago!
Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat;
Et nunc æquali tecum pubesceret avo."†

I come now to observe, that this episode, from the situation which it holds in the poem, has a peculiarly fine effect, by relieving the reader from the gloomy cloud, which a continual round of battles, has collected in his mind. He has yet found little in the character of Hector, but the bold animated general; and when he is wrought up to a high pitch of martial ardour, and himself almost begins to thirst for blood, his soul is finely mellowed by this inimitable scene of domestic love and tenderness. It may be said to operate on the mind as well adapted music between the acts of a tragedy. And it gives so favourable an impression of the husband, the wife, and the son, that during the remainder of the poem they continue to be objects of the highest interest. The author too is

* Oh! only happy maid of Priam's
race,
Whom death delivered from the foe's
embrace!

Commanded on Achilles' tomb to die,
Not forced like us to hard captivity,
Or in a haughty master's arms to lie.

† "Accept," she said, "these moun-
ments of love,
Which in my youth with happier hands
I wove;

Regard these trifles for the giver's sake.
'Tis the last present Hector's wife can
make,

Thou call'st my lost Astyanax to mind,
In thee his features and his form I find;
His eyes so sparkled with a lively flame,
Such were his motions; such was all

his frame;
And, ah! had heaven so pleased, his
years had been the same."

sufficiently cautious, lest Hector's leaving the field should derogate from his military character; for he is careful to show that he did so for a general purpose, and that he determined, while performing this partial duty, never to lose sight of the public cause.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON LANGUAGE.

THE wish has been somewhere expressed, that philosophers had presided at the first formation of language, in consequence of which, it was supposed that it would have been better adapted to express our ideas. But it may be safely asserted in reply, that the advantage of this would have been small indeed, except philosophers had continued unwearied watchmen through successive ages, over all the changes and additions to which language, from the very nature of things, is liable; and this we know to be impossible. Let the original system of language have been what it might, time in its progress would have wrought so many changes in it, as to have thrown obscurity over its origin. Language is allowedly deficient, yet perhaps the cause of this is not to be sought so much in its own nature, as in the ignorance, dishonesty, inaccuracy, or indolence of man. Politicians and casuists so intangle right and wrong, that plain men are puzzled, and, speaking at random, frequently use one word for the other. Divines, in the search after truth, will preach and publish defences for those who promise one thing, and resolve to do another....nay....they will assert this to be not only excusable, but to be what should be done; and while men of plain understanding christen this *Equivocation*, they will assert it to be integrity. The profession of the law, which, if we may judge by the practice of its professors, openly avows and enjoins every perversion possible of human language, must not be meddled with here, both because it is a kind of *noli me tangere* business, and because the instance brought from the preceding science, concludes *a fortiori* against this. Hence we may safely infer, that while the passions and interests of men continue, language must be influenced,

its stability impeded, and consequently uncertainty prevail in a greater or less degree.

We may, however, proceed too far in asserting the defectiveness of language. The ordinary purposes of life seem very satisfactorily managed by it, and, as (after all) they are most important, as concerning the great mass of mankind, we may, with more patience suffer the exercises of ingenuity with which we are occasionally treated in the learned professions. Even this abuse might in a great measure be remedied, if writers on debateable subjects would proceed by mutual agreement to define every term that may be ambiguous in its meaning, and to adhere to, and to inculcate the use of it so defined. In this very necessary work of definition, if the primitive meaning of the word can be traced and preserved, there will be great advantage in an illustration retro-spective, as well as prospective; and as the proper understanding of ancient authors, whether classic or others, is frequently of the utmost importance, that plan of investigation, which at once embraces the past and the future, should be kept in view. Those, who are conversant in critical studies, must often have experienced the confusion consequent on investigations imperfectly conducted, and have often felt bitter regret at the prevalence of the prejudice, which has condemned the study of words as mere trifling, and unworthy of a philosopher. That the unthinking part of mankind should have entertained such an opinion should not surprise us: but we may be allowed to express astonishment, when we find, that those, who make higher pretensions, should join in the thoughtless outcry. When we consider, that the most extensive acquaintance with every branch of science, a deep research into antiquity with its customs, manners, laws, pursuits and opinions, a mathematical precision of mind, with what is rarely found in the same person, a just discernment of the time when we may depart from that precision, an intimacy with matters in general thought too minute to deserve attention, which yet the judicious will find of great importance, a vigilance never weary of catching even the whispers around

When such things are found indispensable in the investigation of words, shall we pronounce that investigation a trifling pursuit; and when we find a skilful etymologist, shall we not receive him with due respect, rather than treat his useful labours with thoughtless derision?

In such pursuits men have stumbled. This must be expected: let us not, therefore, reject their labours; nor despise the high attainments of a Valancey, because he is bowed by the law of human infirmity.

Were it necessary to establish the importance of this pursuit more strongly, we might observe the subject in a different point of view, and having hitherto considered the rare qualifications indispensable for an etymologist, we might consider also the important effects constantly produced on the minds of men by the proper or improper application of words, and in a thousand instances establish the full and deep importance of Mirabeau's assertion, that "Words are things." But, perhaps, our readers will think enough has been said on a subject in general so little interesting. We would, therefore, direct their attention to this curious fact concerning tongues, that in proportion as they ascend into antiquity, and preserve the simplicity of their origin, they are found to possess in a great measure that accuracy which philosophers have wished for.

The modern European tongues of Celtic origin have been little examined, because of the great darkness in which the parent tongues have been involved: while those of Latin origin, as the Italian and Spanish lead us to their stock, in which we find a confirmation of this position. The Latin tongue presents many roots; when we extend our view to its parent, the Greek, the facility of derivation increases; but when we arrive at the Hebrew, which some have thought to have been mediately the source of the preceding, we find a tongue so preserving its simplicity as on a slight examination to resolve itself into about 200 roots. Of the words derived from them, the majority, even at this day, bear before them such marked significance in their

meaning, as directs the attention to some observable qualities in the thing named, and warrants the supposition, that the name was assigned, not at random, but deliberately and intentionally. Thus from the root, GAD, to assault or rush on, comes GEDI, a kid. Virgil in *Georgic* II. 530, will furnish a good comment on this:

.....*Pingues que in gramine lœti
Inter se adversi luctantur cornibus hadu.*

.....*Butting with adverse horns.
The kids sport wanton on the joyful grass.*

From, *chala*, to labour to faintness comes, *chate*, an ornament wrought with labour and pains,

"While the pale artist plies the sickly trade."

A search of this kind would present many unexpected views of the nature and qualities of things, and afford a striking proof, that those who affixed those names must have been attentive observers of nature: for example, the word, AR, signifies to flow; one of its legitimate offspring, AUR, light, has been named thus evidently from observations corresponding in result with those of modern philosophers, who have denominated it a fluid.

The Hebrews were by their religious, which was also their political, constitution, separated from other nations. The study of their law, which prescribed their civil and religious duties, was their only learning; and they were consequently, in the ordinary acceptation of the word, an illiterate people. Their trades seem to have been few, and principally those connected with husbandry, which was their chief pursuit. Hence from the connection that is found ever to exist between the manners of a people and their language, the Hebrew tongue must have been, as we find it, very simple and circumscribed, yet free from the various fluctuations, to which all tongues have been subject, that have been exposed to the operation of causes from which the Hebrew has been exempted.

It presents to us then an interesting and valuable subject of contemplation: we can, through it, approach nearer to the origin of language, and better inspect its primitive mechan-

ism, than through any other tongue yet known: and so far as research has gone, it establishes for this tongue the claim of pregnant accuracy of meaning, in the terms of which it is composed.

Considering the subject a little farther, we must be led to grant to this people the praise of close observation; we should hence be induced to receive, with respect, the fruits of this observation, and to follow the clue, their labours seem to offer. The word above mentioned, *aer*, seems to hold out an invitation to search, and has in fact been the origin of these reflections. *Aur*, is plainly the source of *ang* and *aer*, and *aura*; from which we may justly infer, that some connection has been supposed to exist between the fluids, air and light. Ovid in his description of Chaos implies this strongly in the words, “*Lucis egenus aer*” air devoid of light, as do the remarkable words of Virgil, *Aen.* III. l. 600, “*Celi spirabile lumen*.” An experimental investigation of this might furnish some new facts, while at all events, we can only remain, where we are; for notwithstanding all that has been done in the investigation of light, it is still no more than darkness visible.

Rockville.

A

To the Editor of the *Belfast Magazine*.

“Bellaque matribus detestata.”

HORACE, ODE, I. LIB. I.

SIR,
DACIER and Sanadon, in their commentary on this passage, explain *matres*, in an extended sense, as signifying matrons or women respectable for years or high rank. The latter goes still further, and endeavours to include young unmarried women under this expression; “because” says he, “they have equal reason to dislike war, which exposes their lovers to danger.” “This,” he adds “heightens the beauty of the expression.” In my opinion, if it be permitted to dissent from such high authority, the beauty of the description is rather diminished by viewing it in this light. War is dreadful to women, but more particularly to mothers, whose feelings are so sensible to the dangers of a favourite child. The image which

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the poet wishes to paint, is greatly heightened by being thus shown in the strongest point of view. In like manner, Virgil, to complete the horrors of the alarm sounded by Alecto to excite the Italian states to arms, concludes with a similar image,

“*Et pavidae matres pressere ad ubera natos.*”

This has been closely copied with great success by Akenside, who finishes his description of a storm by a similar image;

“ And every mother closer to her breast
Presses her child.”

In this latter instance the effect is produced by a different cause, which diminishes the grandeur of the idea. It is caused by sympathy, not by terror. Viewing the shipwreck from the shore, the spectators have but a secondary view of the danger, lessened by that tincture of selfishness so beautifully described by Lucretius,

“*Suave mare magno turbantibus æqua-
ra ventis,
E terra alterius magnum spectare laborem;
Non quia rexari quenquam est jucunda
voluptas,
Sed, quibus ipse malis careras, quia cer-
nere suave est.*”

“ ‘Tis pleasant when the seas are
rough, to stand
And view another’s danger, safe at land ;
Not ’cause he’s troubled, but ’tis sweet to
see,

Those cares and fears from which our-
selves are free.”

GREECH.

It may be a confirmation of the opinion that the maternal feeling was the object in Horace’s mind if we consider that it has been a favourite theme of many poets: it is indeed so natural and so affecting, that though often repeated it never cloyes by the repetition. In an English song, the author of which I do not recollect, we have the same idea of the parental anxiety during the absence of a favourite child, conveyed to us in the following lines,

The tender mother knows no joy,
But bodes a thousand harms,
And sickens for her darling boy,
When absent from her arms.

If you think this observation worthy of notice, have the goodness to insert it in your Magazine: Yours,
&c.

P

R r